Truth and
Reconciliation
Commission of Canada

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Interim Report

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"The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation, we are all forced to go the distance."

-Justice Murray Sinclair,
Chair of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada,
to the Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples,
September 28, 2010

Introduction

Purpose

This interim report covers the activities of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada since the appointment of the current three Commissioners on July 1, 2009. The report summarizes:

- the activities of the Commissioners
- the messages presented to the Commission at hearings and National Events
- the activities of the Commission with relation to its mandate
- the Commission's interim findings
- the Commission's recommendations.

Background

Up until the 1990s, the Canadian government, in partnership with a number of Christian churches, operated a residential school system for Aboriginal children. These government-funded, usually church-run schools and residences were set up to assimilate Aboriginal people forcibly into the Canadian mainstream by eliminating parental and community involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

More than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis children were placed in what were known as Indian residential schools. As a matter of policy, the children commonly were forbidden to speak their own language or engage in their own cultural and spiritual practices. Generations of children were traumatized by the experience. The lack of parental and family involvement in the upbringing of their own children also denied those same children the ability to develop parenting skills. There are an estimated 80,000 former students still living today. Because residential schools operated for well more than a century, their impact has been transmitted from grandparents to parents to children. This legacy from one generation to the next has contributed to social problems, poor health, and low educational success rates in Aboriginal communities today.

The 1996 Canadian Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and various other reports and inquiries have documented the emotional, physical, and sexual abuse that many children experienced during their school years. Beginning in the mid-1990s, thousands of former students took legal action against the churches that ran the schools and the federal government that funded them. These civil lawsuits sought compensation for the injuries that individuals had sustained, and for loss of language and culture. They were the basis of several large class-action suits that were resolved in 2007 with the implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the largest class-action settlement in Canadian history. The Agreement, which is being implemented under court supervision, is intended to begin repairing the harm caused by the residential school system.

In addition to providing compensation to former students, the Agreement established the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada with a budget of $60-million and a five-year term.

The Commission's overarching purposes are to:

- reveal to Canadians the complex truth about the history and the ongoing legacy of the church-run residential schools, in a manner that fully documents the individual and collective harms perpetrated against Aboriginal peoples, and honours the resiliency and courage of former students, their families, and communities; and
- guide and inspire a process of truth and healing, leading toward reconciliation within Aboriginal families, and between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal communities, churches, governments, and Canadians gen-

> ...orally. The process will work to renew relationships on a basis of inclusion, mutual understanding, and respect.

To guide its work, the Commission has developed a strategic plan with the following mission and vision statements.

Mission Statement

> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission will reveal the complete story of Canada's residential school system, and lead the way to respect through reconciliation ... for the child taken, for the parent left behind.

Vision Statement

> We will reveal the truth about residential schools, and establish a renewed sense of Canada that is inclusive and respectful, and that enables reconciliation.

Setting Up the Commission: Governance and Operational Framework

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was established by Order-in-Council in June 2008. The initial Commission consisted of Justice Harry LaForme as chair, Claudette Dumont-Smith, and Jane Brewin Morley. Justice LaForme resigned in October 2008, stating that the Commission's independence had been compromised by political interference, and that conflict with the other two Commissioners regarding his authority made the Commission unworkable. Commissioners Dumont-Smith and Brewin Morley resigned in January 2009, stating that the best way forward for a successful Truth and Reconciliation Commission process would be with a new slate of Commissioners.

The parties to the Settlement Agreement then selected three new Commissioners: Justice Murray Sinclair as chair, Chief Wilton Littlechild, and Marie Wilson. Their appointments took effect on July 1, 2009. A ten-member Indian Residential School Survivor Committee, made up of former residential school students, also was appointed to serve as an advisory body to the Commissioners.

The resignation of the initial Commissioners led to a loss of time and momentum. By the time the new Commissioners took office, a full year of the Commission's original five-year mandate had passed. From the moment they took office, the new Commissioners faced the challenge of restarting the Commission and restoring its credibility with survivors and the Canadian public.

The decision by the parties to the Settlement Agreement to establish the Commission as a federal government department—as opposed to a commission under the *Inquiries Act*—was made prior to the appointment of the current Commissioners, and is not one with which they would have concurred. That decision has created additional challenges for the Commission. The rules and regulations that govern large, well-established, permanent federal government departments have proven onerous and highly problematic for a small, newly created organization with a time-limited mandate.

Departmental staffing and other processes normally do not apply to federal commissions or special investigations. The requirement that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission comply with provisions that apply to the operations of a federal department has led to significant delays that will have an impact on the Commission's ability to meet its deadlines. The Commission is required to create an entirely new federal department, subject to, and accountable for, the complete range of federal government statutes, regulations, policies, directives, and guidelines. It has to do this with a comparatively small staff and budget. Meeting these requirements has hampered the Commission's ability to carry out its mandate to implement a statement-gathering process, hold National Events and community hearings, and establish processes for document collection and research activities.

One of the consequences of the resignation of the original Commissioners and the designation of the Commission as a department of government is the discrepancy between the original federal Treasury Board approval of the Commission budget in 2008 and the orders-in-council appointing the current Commissioners in 2009. The Commission expects its final public event to be held close to July 1, 2014. However, its current budget authority will have expired before then, and it is clear there will be a period of time after July 1, 2014, required to transfer records to the National Research Centre and to make final decisions concerning the Commission's financial records, personnel resources, and physical assets. A period of time after July 1, 2014 also may be required for translation and production of the Commission's final report. The Commission will require orders-in-council and funding authorities to be modified to expire at the end of the 2014–15 fiscal year.

Recommendations

1) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada issue the necessary orders-in-council and funding authorities to ensure that the end date of the Commission and Commissioners' appointments coincide, including the necessary wind-down period after the Commission's last public event.

j) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada work with the Commission to ensure the Commission has adequate funds to complete its mandate on time.

l) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada ensure that Health Canada, in conjunction with appropriate provincial, territorial, and traditional health care partners, has the resources needed to provide for the safe completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's full mandate, and to provide for continuous, high-quality mental health and cultural support services for all those involved in Truth and Reconciliation and other Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement activities, through to completion of these activities.

Despite these challenges, the Commission developed a strategic framework to guide its work, established a multi-year budget, and set about making and implementing several key operational decisions in its first year.

Head and Regional Offices

While the residential school system operated across Canada, the majority of schools were located in the West and the North. For this reason, the Commission established its head office in Winnipeg, Manitoba. It retained a small Ottawa office, and opened satellite offices in Hobbema, Alberta, and Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. To extend the Commission's reach into smaller centres and communities and as required by the Settlement Agreement, seven regional liaison workers have been hired to work in Quebec and Atlantic Canada, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Inuit Sub-Commission

In recognition of the unique cultures of the Inuit, and the experiences and impacts of residential schools on them, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also established an Inuit Sub-Commission. It is charged with ensuring that the Commission addresses the challenges to statement gathering and record collection in remote, isolated Inuit communities, and among Inuit throughout Canada. The Inuit Sub-Commission provides the endorsement and supports necessary to earn the trust of Inuit survivors.

Staffing

The Commission staff is drawn from the public service, private sector, and non-governmental organizations. As of July 1, 2011, the Commission employed seventy-five people, including forty-eight Aboriginal employees who work at all levels of the organization.

Commissioner Activities

From the moment of their appointment, the Commissioners made it a priority to meet with former residential school students and staff. When the Commissioners took office, they initially travelled to events already organized by former students. This took them to such places as Ottawa, New Brunswick, Spanish, Ontario, Kamloops, British Columbia, and Cree Nation, Saskatchewan. The Commissioners and Commission staff also have visited hundreds of Aboriginal communities to talk about the Commission, the residential school legacy, and reconciliation.

In their public education work, the Commissioners have attended numerous conferences of Aboriginal organizations and churches, and have appeared as speakers at over 200 conferences and events organized by universities, governments, and churches, as well as by various professional and social organizations. Initially, presentations dealt with the Commission and its mandate, and the history of the residential schools. Dialogue now has moved towards engaging Canadians in discussions about the importance and meaning of reconciliation.

Early in their mandate, the Commissioners received the generous support of Governor General Michaëlle Jean in raising awareness of the Commission and the residential school legacy. The Governor General's primary interest was in engaging youth. In 2009, with the Commissioners, she hosted a special event, Honouring the Future, at Rideau Hall. In 2010 she invited the Commissioners to help engage hundreds of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth at a forum in Vancouver immediately prior to the Vancouver Olympics. Later in the year, she attended the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's first National Event in Winnipeg, where, as the Commission's first Honourary Witness, she participated in a Sharing Circle with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal young people to discuss the legacy of the schools.

The Commissioners also have been active in discussions with regional and federal leaders. In July 2009, they attended and addressed the Annual General Assembly of the Assembly of First Nations. In January 2010, they met with the Inuit of the Métis National Council. In July 2010, they met with the board of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. In September 2010, the Commissioners made a formal presentation to the Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples as part of the Committee's review of Canada's progress since the federal government's formal apology to residential school survivors in 2008. The Commissioners also have had meetings with various federal ministers, and provincial and territorial premiers.

In addition, the Commissioners have been involved in the activities that are outlined further in this report. Map 1 provides an overview of where the Commission has been in the first two years after the appointment of the current Commissioners.

By the end of September 2011, the Commissioners had met with former residential school students in every province and territory in the country.

What People Told the Commission

Over the past two years, the Commission has made it a priority to take every opportunity to hear directly from the people most affected by the residential school system: the students and staff who worked in the schools. In this interim report, it is not possible to summarize all that the Commission has seen, that, for a variety of reasons, including the advanced age of many of the former students, the Commissioners believe certain messages must be relayed to Canadians now.

People have come to these Commissioners to speak of tragedies and horror recovery. Their message is powerful because

[illegible] the lives of parents and children. It is important because it makes no one matter's past and future. It is inspiring because those who never approach victimhood and others of have struggled to build themselves and to guide their lives.

[illegible] people spoke of parents beating or even children who condemned school against their will. Many spoke of troubled families or state violence, abandonment, and to school problems. [illegible] rising throughout the entire flight to school, and of cold and impersonal conditions given to children to attend.

People told the Commission of having sent to school from [illegible] and many thousands of witnesses those their locations. Many Aboriginal were there, it was impossible for their parents to take them. In many schools, children stayed at school over the Christmas holidays, and, in some cases, they stayed over the summer as well. Some did not return home for years at a time.

People spoke of the connection losses they experienced at school. Traditional and other English cultural, clothing and footwear, [illegible] by losing members and grandmothers, were taken from them and were never again. Long hair, also a traditional female that reflected and spoke of identity, was shaved off. Many people had their connection of losing it because it [illegible] to be forcefully organised or [illegible] they had to. Children lost their identity as their names were changed or simply replaced with a number. The Commission has heard of how students lost their individuality, were forced to accept conditions, to march in lines, to march in [illegible] situations, to march, as one of them [illegible] said, like they were animals or a herd, in the words of a number students, it was a frightening, disgusting, and bewildering experience.

Forced [illegible] described how they came from loving families and were cast into harsher institutions. Many spoke of homesickness from [illegible], and of losing children trying their schools along the way [illegible] directions and never or passed from such other within the schools, and did never permitted for hugging or simply seeing at our families.

Food was strange, spoiled and mixed in many cases, poorly prepared, and often in short supply. Many people recalled being punished for losing weight or it was their place. Others recalled that they were always hungry, and were punished for taking food from the kitchen or the garden.

For many, time in the classroom was [illegible] their day. For many Aboriginal people, they could recall from their history books were savages and brutes, responsible for the deaths of [illegible]. They told the Commission of how the spiritual practices of their parents and ancestors were forbidden and [illegible].

Children were supposed from families or got as others into, but many of those spoke of how they spent much of their school days living behind [illegible] or trapped in the school. Children who had to [illegible] [illegible] to [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

1. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

(a) [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

(a) [illegible]

(b) [illegible]

(c) [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

those schools that have been added to the list under specific criteria.

Former students who attended schools or residences not included in the Settlement Agreement have told us they underwent the same deprivation of language and culture, imposition of religious practices, and physical and sexual misconduct by teachers and boarding home parents or supervisors as experienced by students covered by the Settlement Agreement. Because the schools they attended are not on the list, they are not eligible for compensation under the Settlement Agreement. They say that, once again, they are being abused, injured, or traumatized because they have been left out and isolated.

In particular, the Commission has heard such concerns of exclusion from specific groups of former students:

- The Inuit and Innu of Labrador: None of the boarding schools in Labrador were included in the Settlement Agreement.
- Students who attended the same schools by day as residents living in the residences, but who lived in home settings. In many cases, these "day scholars" did not stay in their own homes with their own families, but in billeted accommodation.
- Inuit students in the northern territories: Community hostels provided housing for students whose parents were away making a traditional living off the land. Some hostels are included in the Agreement, others are not. There is no clearly understood reason why.
- Students who attended boarding schools where the federal government did not have responsibility for the operation of the residences and the care of the children residents there.
- Students who attended non-residential schools, as directed by the federal government, but who also were subjected to cultural denial, and harsh emotional and physical treatment.

The exclusion of these students is a serious roadblock to meaningful and sincere reconciliation.

Recommendations

113) The Commission recommends that the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, with the involvement of other provincial or territorial governments as necessary, identify and implement the earliest possible means to address legitimate concerns of former students who feel unfairly left out of the Settlement Agreement, in order to diminish obstacles to healing within Aboriginal communities and reconciliation within Canadian society.

Impact and Benefit of Apology from Canada

On June 11, 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued a "Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools." While not all survivors accept the apology, many have told the Commission that hearing the government's apology has been very important to their healing.

Many of the people who have addressed the Commission have made reference to the Commission's commitment to act "For the Child Taken, For the Parent Left Behind." Often, they have mentioned their own parents, noting that no one had ever apologized to them. For their part, some parents have said they felt they had been left out of the apology.

The apology does talk about the impacts of the residential schools, not just on the students, but also on their families and communities. However, there appears to be limited awareness of its actual wording.

The Commission continues to face huge challenges in raising awareness, among non-Aboriginal Canadians, of the residential school history and legacy. This presents an enormous limitation to the possibility of long-term understanding and meaningful reconciliation. The Commission believes the Canadian school system has a major role to play in re-educating the country about this part of our long-term, shared history, with its present-day implications. Making the apology available to all Canadian students in their schools would be a positive step in this direction.

Recommendations

114) The Commission recommends that, to ensure that survivors and their families receive as much healing benefit as the apology may bring them, the Government of Canada distribute individual copies of the "Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools" to all known residential school survivors.

115) The Commission recommends the Government of Canada distribute to every secondary school in Canada a framed copy of the "Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools" for prominent public display and ongoing educational purposes.

Establishing a Framework for Reconciliation

There is a need for analysis, by governments at all levels and by churches, of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in order to deepen understanding of, and appreciation for, the value of the Declaration as a framework for working towards ongoing reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

Recommendation

113) The Commission recommends that federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as all parties to the Settlement Agreement, undertake to move and explore the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a framework for working towards ongoing reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation

In response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Canada created a healing fund, administered primarily by Aboriginal peoples, that would specifically address the residential school legacy and assist former students who were physically and sexually abused. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), established for this purpose in 1998, delivers a wide array of programs while conducting innovative research on the effects of the residential system on Aboriginal peoples. Its directors convinced the federal government to expand its mandate to include not only those who attended the schools but also those who were affected intergenerationally (the parents and descendants of the students) as well. In 2010 the federal government discontinued funding for the AHF, thus depriving former students and their families of a highly valued and effective resource. The closing of the Aboriginal Health Foundation will make Canada's reconciliation journey even more challenging in the years to come.

Recommendation

114) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada meet immediately with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to develop a plan to restore funding for healing initiatives to the Foundation within the next fiscal year.

The International Context

The Commissioners determined early on that the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada has an international importance. This was underscored when the United Nations proclaimed 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation. Over the past two decades, more than forty truth and reconciliation commissions have been struck following civil conflicts in countries such as South Africa, Peru, Colombia, and Sierra Leone. Canada's TRC is unique in that it is the first commission to address human rights violations that span over a century and focus on the treatment of Indigenous children.

The Commissioners also recognize it is important to place Canada's residential school system within the international context, particularly now that the world community, including Canada, has endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The residential school system was not unique to Canada. Governments and missionary agencies in many countries around the world established boarding schools as part of the colonial process. The systems varied from time to time and place to place, but they shared many common elements and left a common legacy. For these reasons, the Commission has participated in international activities. Representatives from other countries that have a history of residential schooling for Indigenous children, or similar abuses of Indigenous peoples, also have travelled to Canada to observe Commission events.

In April 2010, Justice Murray Sinclair made a presentation to the Ninth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York on the work of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In 2010 the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recognized the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada as a model of best practices and an inspiration for other countries.

In September 2010, Commissioner Wilton Littlechild addressed the United Nations Human Rights Council's fifteenth session in Geneva, Switzerland, on the value that truth commissions bring to global reconciliation efforts. There, he expressed the Commission's support for an international experts' seminar on truth and reconciliation processes. Such commissions can play an important role in resolving conflict and improving relations between states and Indigenous peoples.

In September 2010, Commissioners Littlechild and Wilson presented at the sixth gathering of Healing Our Spirit WorldWide, an international forum and healing initiative that focuses on health, governance, and drug and alcohol issues and programs in Indigenous communities across the globe. Many former residential school students from Canada participated in this event.

In October 2010, the Commissioners co-hosted a youth retreat in British Columbia with the International Center for Transitional Justice. This initiative brought together Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth to learn about social justice, the role of truth and memory projects, and the specific history and purpose of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, and to identify opportunities for youth to design and participate in truth and reconciliation activities here in Canada.

In March 2011, the Commission participated in the International Expert Group meeting on Indigenous Children and Youth in Detention, Custody, Adoption and Foster Care in

Vancouver. Commissioners Littlechild and Wilson attended a special forum on the Native American boarding schools in the United States that was held in Boulder, Colorado. Commissioner Wilson met with representatives of the Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles to gain insight into the recording, preservation, and educational usage of oral histories of Holocaust survivors. In May 2011, there was follow-up work at the Tenth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in an international experts' seminar on truth and reconciliation processes.

In conclusion, the Commission has established relations with international organizations that enable it to learn from the work of other commissions, and to make contributions from its own experiences.

Commission Activities

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement sets out an extensive mandate for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It ranges from research and report writing, holding national and community events, collecting statements from Canadians about their residential schools experience, and collecting documents from the parties to the Settlement Agreement, to educating the public through commemorative events. The work of the Commission to date is summarized best under the following headings:

- Statement Gathering
- Document Collection
- Research and Report Preparation
- A National Research Centre
- Commemoration
- National Events
- Community Events

Statement Gathering: Truth Sharing

Until now, the voices of those who were directly involved in the day-to-day life of the schools, particularly the former students, largely have been missing from the historical record. The Commission is committed to providing every former residential student—and every person whose life was affected by the residential school system—with the opportunity to create a record of that experience.

The work of other truth and reconciliation commissions has confirmed the particular importance of the statement-giving process as a means to restore dignity and identity to those who have suffered grievous harms. Statement gathering is a central element in the Commission mandate, and statement giving is voluntary. Since there are estimated to be at least 80,000 living former students, the magnitude and complexity of the Commission's commitment are significant. The statements gathered will be used by the Commission in the preparation of its report, and eventually will be housed in the National Research Centre (NRC, to be established by the Commission, and discussed in a following section).

Statement gathering has occurred at National Events, community events, and at events coordinated by the Commission's regional liaisons. Trained statement gatherers now are present in most regions across the country, with more resources being added continually.

Statement gathering involves recording the biographies of those providing statements to the Commission. Statement providers are encouraged to talk about any and all aspects of their lives they feel are important, including times before, during, and after attending a residential school. The family members of survivors, former staff, and others affected by the residential schools also are encouraged to share their experiences.

The Commission recognizes that providing a statement to the Commission is often very emotional and extremely difficult for individuals. For this reason, statement providers are given the option of having a health support worker, a cultural support worker, or a professional therapist attend their session. These health supports ensure statement providers are able to talk to someone who can assist them if necessary before and after providing a statement.

Individuals are given the option of having an audio or video recording made of their experiences. If they wish, they are given a copy of their statement immediately at the end of the interview. They may choose to provide their statement in writing or over the phone if proper health supports are in place.

Privacy considerations surrounding statement gathering are extremely important to the Commission. All persons who make statements to the Commission do so voluntarily.

The Commission provides opportunities to give statements in a number of different ways. These include:

- at public Sharing Circles at national and community events
- at Commission hearings at scheduled locations across the country, including National Events
- at private statement-gathering sessions where only a trained statement gatherer and health worker are present.

At Sharing Circles and Commission hearings, statements are made in a public setting. People who make their statement in a private setting can choose from two levels of privacy protection. The first option ensures full privacy according to the standards of the federal *Privacy Act*. The second option allows the statement provider to waive certain rights to privacy in the interests of having their experiences known to, and shared with, the greater public.

People who waive those rights are giving consent to the Commission and to the National Research Centre to use their statement for public education purposes or to disclose their statement to third parties for public education purposes in a respectful and dignified manner (such as for third-party documentary films). The Commission and National Research Centre have the authority to decide whether to provide such access.

These options are explained carefully to the statement provider before a private statement-gathering session. To date, over half the statement providers have chosen to have their statements recorded for public education purposes.

The Commission also ensures that all digital information is transmitted and protected carefully during trips in and out of the field.

The Commission has made it a high priority to gather statements from the elderly or ill, as well as from particularly vulnerable and marginalized former students who are at risk. It has undertaken a number of innovative measures, including a day-long event facilitated by Métis Calgary Family Services at the downtown branch of the Calgary Public Library that focused on collecting statements from homeless individuals. Projects designed to reach those survivors in jails also are underway.

By the end of June 2011, the Commission had collected 1157 individual statements. An additional 649 statements had been given in Sharing Circles and at public hearings. One hundred and fifteen material and artistic submissions had been received. The Commission now has in place both the mechanisms and process to ensure it is able to meet its statement-gathering goals. Regional liaisons play a role in coordinating and organizing a series of specific and targeted visits to communities across the country. Future Commission National Events and the community hearings held in conjunction with those events will continue to play a significant role in statement gathering. Private statement-gathering options and Sharing Circles will be extended to communities and individuals in ever-increasing numbers in the coming year, with advance notice circulated to communities well before the planned visits.

Document Collection

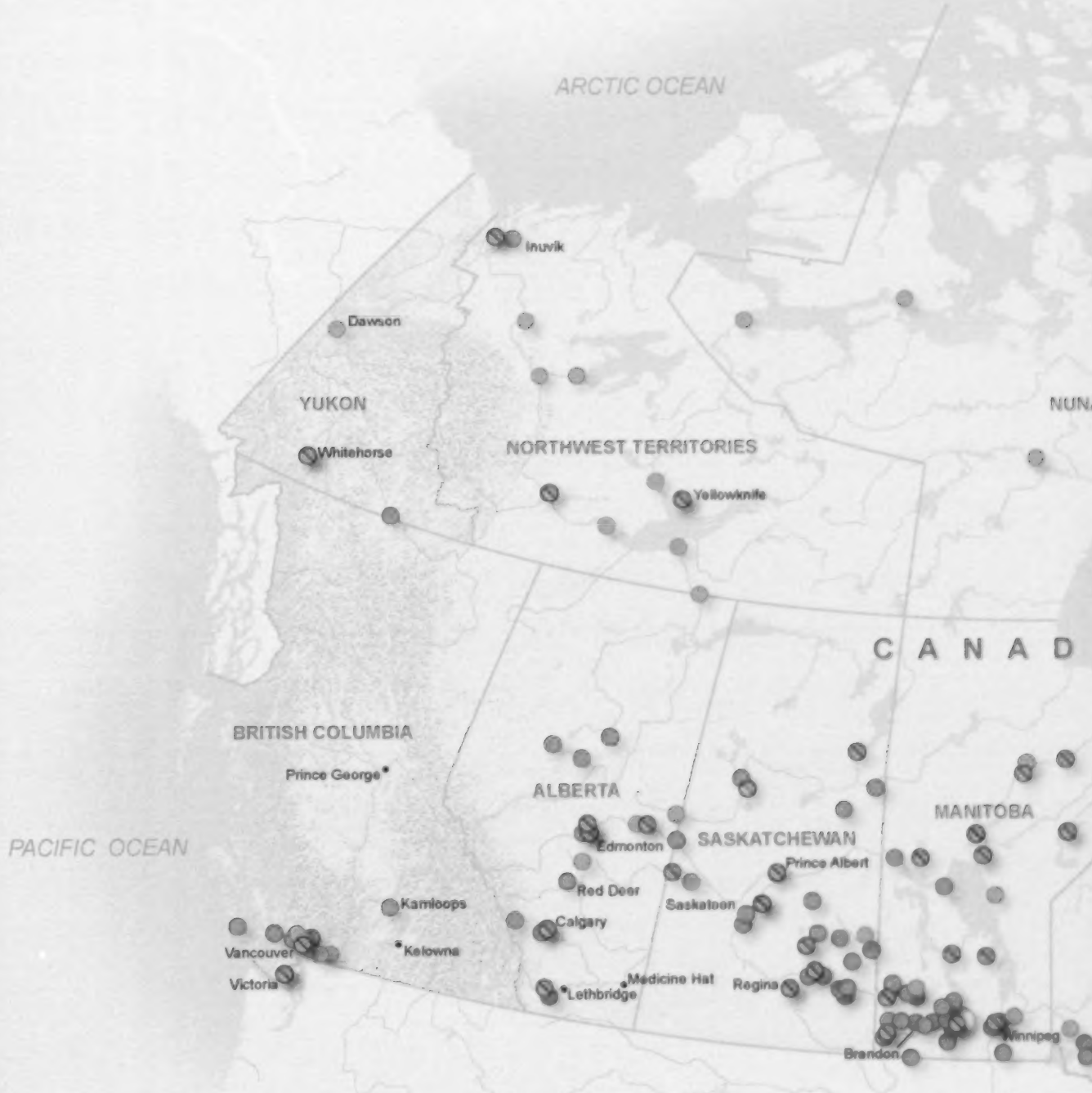
The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement commits the parties to the Agreement to providing the Commission with all relevant documents in their possession or control. This is to be done subject to the legislated privacy interests of an individual, and in compliance with privacy and access-to-information legislation. Exceptions are to be made in cases where solicitor-client privilege applies.

In keeping with that Agreement, documents from the Independent Assessment Process (IAP) established by the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, existing resolved litigation, and federal government dispute-resolution processes (all processes dealing with claims of abuse at the schools) are being sought by the Commission, to become part of the documents collected.

In February 2011, the Commission retained a consulting firm to assist in collecting all relevant documents from church and government holdings. The Commission is in the process of developing a fully functional and secure database, a team of historical researchers to review and audit the holdings of the various parties to the Settlement Agreement, and the technical resources to digitize the entire collection.

Each of the three main activities in document collection—developing the database, the digitization, and research—are extremely complex projects. The database will provide the Commission with state-of-the-art backup and secure storage, while delivering sophisticated search-and-report functions, and multi-media capacity. Researchers will identify, review, provide meta-data tagging, and report on all relevant documents. Digitization will involve the electronic conversion of material that currently exists in a host of formats, including photographs, glass-plate negatives, film, video, onionskin paper, cut-sheet paper, and microfilm.

This effort will involve the records of at least eighty-eight church archives and as many as thirty or more government institutions. In addition, the creation of a full record also would require the collection of relevant records held by organizations and individuals other than Canada and the churches, such as museums, provincial and university archives, and cultural and Aboriginal research centres.

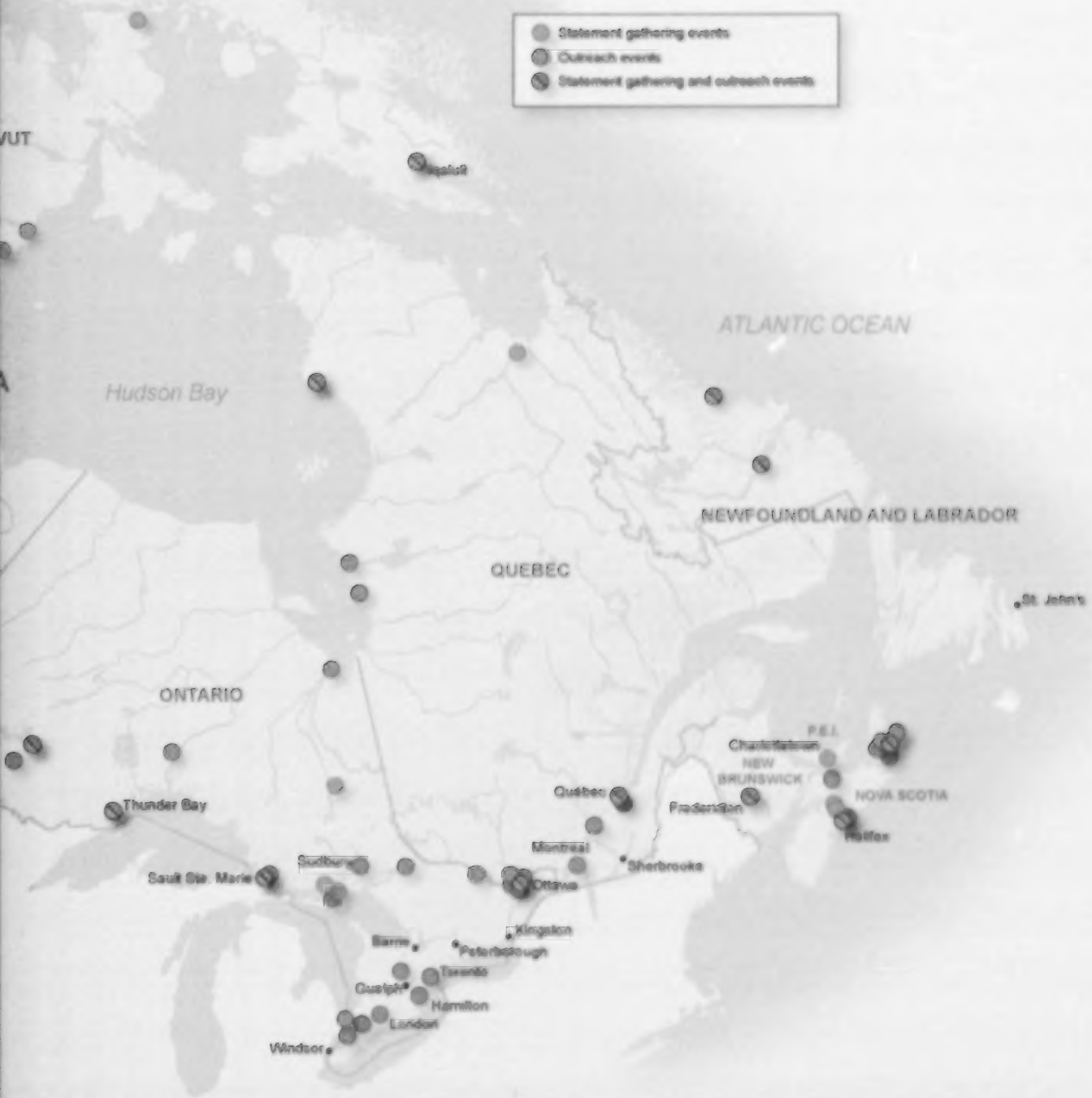


From 2009-2011, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada took part in more than 400 outreach and statement gathering initiatives. This map illustrates the communities that were visited during that time period.

Truth and Reconciliation

TRC in the Community

(Map 1)



The document collection process has been placed at risk by two factors: the lack of federal government and church cooperation, and cost-related issues.

Lack of Cooperation

The federal government has been aware of its need to provide all relevant documents since the signing of the 2005 agreement-in-principle that preceded the final Settlement Agreement. Despite this, the federal government

- has provided the Commission with only a very limited portion of the relevant documents in its possession
- has taken the position that it has no obligation to identify and provide relevant historical documents held by Library and Archives Canada to the Commission. Under this approach, departments would have to search and produce records only from active and recent files. This is inappropriate in dealing with matters dating back over a century.
- has informed the Commission that, despite the Commission's request, it has not agreed to provide the Commission with the Settlement Agreement and Dispute Resolution (SADRE) database, which contains all the residential school research files of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.
- has yet to provide the Commission with appropriate levels of access to federal archives—an issue that compromises both document collection and report preparation.

In addition, the federal government has taken the position that it cannot disclose records in its possession if those records were provided to it by the churches in response to specific residential schools court cases. It maintains this position even for records created by the federal government but that contain information first obtained from church records. The federal government asserts that since it obtained the church records and information through the litigation process, it is subject to an implied undertaking to use or disclose those records only in relation to the specific court decisions to which the records relate. The federal government asserts that the fact that the government and the churches settled such court cases through the Settlement Agreement, which includes an express obligation that Canada and the churches would disclose all relevant records in their possession, does not constitute a waiver of those implied undertakings. In the case of a conflict between the implied undertakings and the express obligation in the Settlement Agreement to produce all records in its possession to the Commission, the government maintains it must give preference to the implied undertakings. The Commission finds this position unacceptable.

In addition, while the Commission has received helpful cooperation from most of the churches and archivists it has dealt with, individual church archivists have sought to impose conditions before they will produce records to the Commission. Such conditions include:

- instructions as to how the Commission should caption photographs in its reports
- limitations on the Commission's use of photographs to a "one-time-only" use
- distinctions between their "internal" and "external" and "restricted" and "unrestricted" records
- restrictions as to how the Commission can use records in different categories.

Some archivists insist that the Commission acknowledge that the churches own copyright in the records located in their archives. With respect to such claims, the churches make no copyright distinctions based on who created the records or when, and do not explain what copyright interests they are seeking to protect.

All these issues have caused and continue to cause considerable delay for the Commission in its attempt to meet its mandated obligation and enforce compliance of the parties' obligations to produce relevant records. It is unlikely that the document collection process will be completed without a significant shift in attitude on the part of Canada and those parties who have been reluctant to cooperate.

Cost-related issues

The Settlement Agreement states that Canada and the churches must compile and produce all relevant documents and must bear the cost of producing those documents. Where only original documents are involved, the parties, once they have compiled and produced the documents, may request that the Commission pay the costs of making reproductions of the originals. To date, no such requests have been made.

In terms of the number of documents to be collected, the Government of Canada estimates that it has between five and fifty million relevant files in its active and semi-active collections. Beyond this, it may be necessary to review over 100,000 boxes of records held by Library and Archives Canada, including 80,000 boxes of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada records. In addition, there are at least 88 church archives from which the Commission must review records.

Aside from providing Commission researchers general access to the federal archives, Canada has not provided any proposal or signalled any intention of fulfilling its obligation to identify, organize and produce the Library and Archives Canada documents. Based on current project estimates, it

is apparent that the costs of document collection would far exceed the Commission's $60-million budget if the Commission were to assume Canada's document compilation obligations in respect of federal archives. This clearly was not contemplated by the parties, given the funding and timing limitations set out in the Settlement Agreement.

These issues have placed the Commission's ability to fulfill its mandate in jeopardy. They also threaten to undermine the National Research Centre that the parties have called on the Commission to establish. Having tried unsuccessfully to informally resolve these issues, the Commission has determined that it must seek judicial guidance. The Commission will be referring these matters to the supervising court for advice and guidance on how best to ensure timely compliance by all parties with their document production obligations.

Recommendations

17) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada and the churches produce all their relevant records to the Commission as quickly as possible.

18) The Commission recommends that Canada and the churches make a dramatic change in the way they address the funding and timeliness of document production and digitization.

19) The Commission recommends that all agencies and organizations that are not parties to the Settlement Agreement, but have holdings relevant to the history and legacy of residential schools (such as provincial and university archives, libraries, museums, galleries, and Aboriginal organizations), contact the Commission and assist the Commission in receiving copies of all such relevant documents.

Research and Report Preparation

The Commission is undertaking research into both the history and legacy of the residential school system, and the concepts and practices of reconciliation as they relate to the Commission's mandate. In December 2009, the Commission hosted a gathering of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars and practitioners with research expertise in various areas of relevance to the Commission's work. They provided advice on the development of the research agenda. The Commission has conducted research to produce a number of public education tools, including a brochure on the history of residential schools, a short history of the system and its legacy, slide shows focusing on schools in regions where National Events have taken place, posters that highlight the history of individual schools and key themes in the history of the system, and national and regional maps identifying the location of residential schools. Several internal research projects required for the Commission's final report are now underway, including one dealing with the experiences of residential school staff. In August 2010, the Commission also invited external researchers to submit proposals for work in a number of key areas.

Missing Children and Unmarked Graves

In 2007 the Commission, at the request of Ministers Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Jim Prentice, undertook the Missing Children and Unmarked Graves Project. Large numbers of the Aboriginal children who were sent to residential schools never returned to their home communities because they ran away or died, or their fate is unaccounted for otherwise. Often, their parents and families never were informed of their disappearance or death. These students have come to be referred to as the Missing Children. Their fate is the focus of a series of research projects being conducted by a team of Commission researchers. Additional funding to carry out this work has not been provided to the Commission.

Working with the signatories to the Settlement Agreement, the federal government, the churches, and Aboriginal organizations, the Missing Children research projects will produce as complete a list as possible of children who died at the schools and the cause of their deaths. It will document the fate of those children who never returned to their home communities, and locate school burial sites and commemorations that are likely. But many of those children are buried.

A research strategy and plans for a series of projects have been developed, and the Commission has begun to implement this strategy. The research team is mindful that this research must be carried out in a way that is respectful of cultural and traditional practices in each part of the country.

A National Research Centre: Establishing a National Memory

The Commission is mandated to establish a National Research Centre that is accessible to former students, their families and communities, the general public, researchers, and educators.

To assist the Commission in developing plans for the National Research Centre, the Commission hosted an international forum in March 2011 in Vancouver, British Columbia. The forum brought together representatives of truth and memory projects from sixteen countries, former students, academics, archivists, representatives of international, Inf-

[illegible] and provincial governments, members of the media, and Commission staff. The participants discussed the benefits and drawbacks associated with approaches for the development of a centre that will both house and make accessible the government records of the residential school system in Canada.

In November 2011, the Commission issued a Call for Proposals from organizations and agencies interested in working with the Commission to establish the National Research Centre.

Commemoration: Creating a Lasting Legacy

Under the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, the Federal government is committed to funding commemoration initiatives that address the residential school experience. Former students, their families, communities, and groups of former students are eligible to submit proposals for regional or national commemorative projects to the Commission.

The Commission's ten-member Indian Residential Schools Survivor Committee reviews the proposals and makes recommendations on funding. The Commission then forwards the recommended proposals to the Federal government, which administers the $20 million commemoration fund.

The first of two calls for proposals was issued in 2011. It provided for the allocation of $10 million.

The first call for proposals set broad categories that would allow individuals and communities to explore a wide range of commemoration initiatives, each intended to honour, celebrate, heal, or memorialize the residential school experience.

A funding limit of $50,000 was established for individual community commemoration projects. If communities collaborate on a single project, the amount of funding can increase by $50,000 per community to a maximum of $500,000. The limit for any individual national commemoration project was set at $1 million.

Over 200 proposals were received in response to the first call for proposals. The commemoration funds have been overseen by the Indian Residential School Survivor Committee and forwarded to the Federal government.

The Commission believes there should be a formal residential school commemoration in every province and territory in Canada. It encourages all governments, educational institutions, and churches to ask themselves what they will do to commemorate the residential schools system.

Recommendation

[illegible] The Commission recommends that governments, educational institutions, and churches consult, design, announce, and publicly unveil residential school commemorations before the completion of the Commission's mandate.

National Events

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement requires the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to hold seven National Events within the first two years of the launch of the Commission, and to [illegible] ceremony at the end of the Commission's mandate. However, the Commission, in consultation with the parties to the Settlement Agreement, has determined to hold the events over its full five-year mandate. The first National Event was held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, in June 2010, the second in Inuvik, Northwest Territories, in June and July 2011, the third in Halifax, Nova Scotia, in October 2012. Subsequent National Events are planned for Saskatchewan, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia, with the Commission's closing ceremony taking place in Ontario.

The National Events provide the Commission with important opportunities to reach out and connect with Canadians of all cultures and backgrounds, intended to focus national attention on the residential school issue, help stimulate public engagement and education. Former students, families, and communities have been able to share their experiences in a context that allows for a more examination of the issues associated with residential schools. Simultaneously, the events have been defined by public acknowledgements of the schools' legacy and history, and by celebrations and appreciation of Aboriginal culture.

The Winnipeg National Event, June 16–19, 2010

The Winnipeg National Event, whose theme was *It's About Respect – A Journey of Survival, Strength and Resilience*, commenced with a sunrise ceremony on June 16, 2010, at the Forks National Historic Site. Located [illegible] the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet, the Forks has a long history as a gathering site. Much of the event was staged in a tent during poor rainy weather. Despite this, an average of more than 10,000 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people per day came together in the spirit of understanding and respect, to learn about residential schools and honour the experiences of survivors. For many, the event was their first exposure to the residential school story. For many survivors, it was their first opportunity to speak publicly about their experiences.

Many former students came to the Winnipeg event as they could provide a statement about their residential school experience. In the weeks leading up to the event, the Commission coordinated a significant outreach effort that brought former students to Winnipeg and focused them as a central

of contributors. Her thoughts when studying the 1948 Saskatchewan Bush Conference, Manitoba, on Winnipeg's splendid and diverse collection of the Northern Manitoba and North Dakota. In addition, over 500 submissions contributed to these texts—and we urge us to ensure the record exists.

Meeting Elders throughout the Winnipeg event provided participants with an opportunity to voice their experiences into the public records and to share in oral stories. Elders interviews gathering opportunities were offered by each.

Representatives of the Roman Catholic, Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches took a backseat for former residential schools immediately after the official opening. At the close of each day, a treasure of Reconciliation record was held in a large gathering area.

One of the first public education activities was "Aboriginal Perspectives on Indian Residential Schools" a two-day conference sponsored by the University of Manitoba Centre for Human Rights Research. Featuring keynotes by Aboriginal political leaders, church representatives, professionals, academics, and survivors who made presentations on the schools and their legacy, the morning panel discussions explored the most controversial subjects of both and reconciliation commissions.

By a more informal way, learning circle plans by a variety of cross-cultural sessions organized by the Residential School Legacy were explored.

- The Learning Circle presented a presentation provided Aboriginal knowledge, Church and government archival video, studio photographs of Manitoba and southwestern Ontario, combined schools available to Ontario students.
- At the Manitoba Inter church representatives and Aboriginal people discussed reconciliation efforts to their communities.
- The Gallery Tour highlighted Aboriginal contributions to commercial and professional spirit.
- The Inuit Tour demonstrated Inuit art and commentaries and displayed the modernized school legacy from the Inuit perspective.
- The Métis Tour reflected the experiences of modernized schools to collected schools such as Métis, dance, photographs, documentary, and video.
- The Legacy of Hope's photo exhibit Where are the children displayed the memorial modernized school legacy. The Legacy of Hope is a national Aboriginal charitable organization dedicated to raising awareness and understanding of the Legacy of modernized schools.

Two additional concerts featured a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal musicians. Performers included Buffy Sainte-Marie, classic lightsticks, Inns, and Métis fiddlers. Métis cultural events included:

- [illegible] Evening Métis concert at a Métis dance ceremony.
- Métis [illegible] the modernized cultural experiences by Aboriginal lightning. A feature of the Inns and Métis Aboriginal [illegible] Aboriginal people.
- An exhibit of the Winnipeg Art Gallery of the Inns Cree, [illegible] Métis that showcase the modernized [illegible] Aboriginal people by Canadian Inns, [illegible] Aboriginal Inuit and Inns [illegible] Métis [illegible].
- The record [illegible] of the play Métis [illegible] Métis [illegible] Inns.
- An exhibit [illegible] of buildings by Aboriginal cultural Aboriginal [illegible] Aboriginal [illegible] and [illegible] Inns camp.

By the close [illegible] Inns Aboriginal [illegible] Inns provided Inns a special Inns [illegible] Aboriginal and Inns Aboriginal [illegible] Aboriginal [illegible] Aboriginal [illegible]

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

Review of Fee Requests

- funding for treatment of affected individuals and their families.[1]

Recommendation 1.10.3 called for the establishment of a "national repository of records and video collections related to residential schools." This national repository would:

- facilitate access to documentation and electronic exchange of research on residential schools
- provide financial assistance for the collection of testimony and continuing research
- work with educators in the design of Aboriginal curriculum that explains the history and effects of residential schools
- conduct a public education programme on the history and effects of residential schools and remedies applied to relieve their negative effects.

Unfortunately, the majority of these recommendations were not adopted or even acknowledged by the federal government. In 1998 the Minister of Indian Affairs finally responded with a "Statement of Reconciliation" that specifically addressed the residential school system as part of her government's formal response to RCAP, entitled *Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*:

> The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.[2]

It would take another decade of litigation and negotiation following the release of the RCAP report before the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was reached. In that agreement, Canada and the churches agreed to survivors' demands for individual compensation for all students, independent assessment process for victims of abuse, the establishment of a truth commission, and the creation of a national archive dealing with residential schools. This addressed, but did not fulfill, many of the elements in the RCAP residential school recommendations. In this respect, the TRC is a living testament to former students' perseverance in demanding an inquiry into the residential school system.

Reconciliation Recommendations

RCAP's *Final Report* is a particularly significant resource. It invited Canadians to participate in a national dialogue on possible pathways to reconciliation. It offered hundreds of relevant recommendations, too numerous to be reviewed here, but their main message was the need for a new relationship between Canada and Aboriginal peoples. Four guiding principles for the new relationship were proposed: mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility. Aboriginal nations would be recognized as the third order of government in Canada alongside the federal and provincial or territorial branches. Recognition of Aboriginal peoples' inherent right to self-determination would be the only pathway to Aboriginal reconciliation with Canada.

One of the most prominent recommendations was the issuing of what was termed a "New Royal Proclamation" to symbolize the beginning of a new era between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. RCAP hoped that this proclamation would "establish the infrastructure for the new relationship. ... [with] critical institutions for the shift to the nation as the basic unit of Aboriginal government and for structuring the negotiating process."[3] A New Royal Proclamation should contain:

- acknowledgement of "the profoundly harmful elements of the past ... as a means of reconciliation"
- creation of a process to recognize Aboriginal nations to which would be vested the right of self-determination
- establishment of a treaty process framework that commits the government to "respect and implement existing treaties in accord with their spirit and intent"
- clarification regarding Aboriginal title and the removal of any extinguishment requirements for land claims settlements
- recognition of Métis land rights and governance.[4]

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1 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volume 1: *Looking Forward, Looking Back* (Ottawa: Canada Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 365–366.

2 Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, *Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (Ottawa: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 1998), http://www.ahf.ca/downloads/gathering-strength.pdf.

3 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volume 5: *Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment* (Ottawa: Canada Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 21.

4 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*, Volume 5: *Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment* (Ottawa: Canada Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1996), 7–8.

The 1998 federal response to RCAP ignored the "Royal Proclamation" recommendation. It did include an expression of regret for past wrongs and a federal pledge to focus on four priority areas: renewing the partnership, strengthening Aboriginal governance, developing a new fiscal relationship, and supporting strong communities.

There have been several attempts to assess the implementation of the RCAP recommendations but their number and scope complicate such an assessment. While the Auditor General has produced periodic reviews of Aboriginal programs, the majority of these audits look at the performance of *existing* programs. They do not, however, assess the government's progress in implementing programs that the RCAP *Final Report* recommended in order to meet needs identified by the Commission.

Thus far, the federal government has made little effort to monitor its own progress in implementing RCAP's recommendations. For example, Canada committed to developing an "Aboriginal Report Card" in 2004 but this was never completed. Treasury Board did provide two Aboriginal-specific sections in its 2004 and 2005 "Canada's Performance" reports. These reports were discontinued in 2006.

In 2006 the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) issued a ten-year report card that looked at the RCAP *Final Report*'s recommendations. This report card gave Canada a failing grade in over half (thirty-seven of sixty-five) the categories of recommendations.[5]

Academic as well as political assessments have been critical of Canada's failure to acknowledge, let alone implement, the majority of RCAP's recommendations. In his 2008 book *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada*, political philosopher John Ralston Saul lamented the federal government's missed opportunity to "engage" with RCAP's recommendations as a "most foolish refusal."[6] However, he pointed hopefully to examples where Canadians have made progress in adopting RCAP's core principles, and he cites its *Final Report* directly: "This great document is slowly making its way because it is the most important statement we now have of our reality—one that embraces 'a relationship of mutual trust and loyalty' and deals with the *real* role of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada." He also notes that Aboriginal peoples have much to teach the rest of the country about reconciliation.

> Non-Aboriginals appear to be moving ever so tentatively toward reconciliation, which would be a first step toward understanding the situation differently. As always in our history, the elegance and generosity when it is a matter of reconciliation comes largely from the indigenous side. From those who have been wronged. All around us there are a multitude of negotiations and compromises and concerns. As they are resolved in a pattern that increasingly gives Aboriginals room to manoeuvre and re-establish their role as players and leaders in their own worlds, so they also gain the room to play an important role in Canada as a whole.[7]

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is of the opinion that the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples identified the key issues to be addressed in righting the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Although RCAP did not identify a specific role for the churches in addressing a reconciliation process, such participation clearly is captured by the spirit of RCAP's recommendations. Furthermore, RCAP's guiding principles of mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing, and mutual responsibility are critical to any reconciliation process.

5 Assembly of First Nations, *Report Card on Aboriginal Peoples at 10 Years: A Report Card* (Ottawa: AFN, 2006), http://www.chn.ca/news/backgrounder/aboriginals/pdf/afn_rc-ap.pdf.

6 John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 25–26.

7 John Ralston Saul, *A Fair Country: Telling Truths About Canada* (Toronto: Viking Canada, 2008), 98–99.

Conclusions

There can be no movement toward reconciliation without an understanding of the rationale, operation, and overall impact of the schools. Through its work, the Commission has reached certain conclusions about the residential school system. The truth about the residential school system will cause many Canadians to see their country differently. These are hard truths, but only by coming to grips with these truths can we lay the foundation for reconciliation.

The Commission has concluded that:

1) Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal children.
2) Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal families.
3) Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal culture.
4) Residential schools constituted an assault on self-governing and self-sustaining Aboriginal nations.
5) The impacts of the residential school system were immediate, and have been ongoing since the earliest years of the schools.
6) Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

1) Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal children.

- The residential school system separated children from their parents without providing them with adequate physical or emotional care or supervision.
- Due to this lack of care and supervision, the schools often were sites of institutionalized child neglect, excessive physical punishment, and physical, sexual, and emotional abuse.
- Persistent underfunding left the schools dependent on student labour.
- Several generations of children were traumatized by their residential school experience: by having been abused, by having witnessed abuse, or by having been coerced to participate in abuse.
- All these factors contributed to high mortality rates, poor health, and low academic achievement.

Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal families.

- The residential school system was established with the specific intent of preventing parents from exercising influence over the educational, spiritual, and cultural development of their children.
- The schools not only separated children from their parents and grandchildren, but because of the strict separation of girls from boys, they also separated sisters from brothers. Older siblings were also separated from younger siblings.
- As each succeeding generation passed through the system, the family bond weakened, and, eventually, the strength and structure of Aboriginal family bonds were virtually destroyed.
- Given the high mortality rates that prevailed for much of the system's history, many parents spent their lives grieving, never having been given a proper description of how their child died or where they were buried, and not being able to hold an appropriate ceremony of mourning.

3) Residential schools constituted an assault on Aboriginal culture.

- The residential school system was intended to "civilize" and "Christianize" Aboriginal children, replacing Aboriginal cultural values with Euro-Canadian values.
- The residential school system belittled and repressed Aboriginal cultures and languages. By making students feel ashamed of who they were, the system undermined their sense of pride and self-worth. This deprived them of the cultural and economic advantages and benefits that come from knowing two languages.

4) Residential schools constituted an assault on self-governing and self-sustaining Aboriginal nations.

- The residential school system was intended to assimilate Aboriginal children into broader Canadian society. With assimilation would come the breaking up of the reserves and the end of treaty obligations. In this way the schools were part of a broader Canadian policy to undermine Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal self-government.

5) The impacts of the residential school system were immediate, and have been ongoing since the earliest years of the schools.

- The damage extended far beyond the numbers of children who attended these schools: families, communities, and cultures all suffered. Students were estranged from their families and communities; cultural, spiritual, and language transmission was disrupted; education did not prepare children for traditional lifestyles or emerging economic opportunities (which often were limited); parenting skills were lost; and patterns of abuse were developed that continue to have an impact on communities today.
- The schools' legacy shaped people's whole life experience, including their employment and their interactions with social service agencies, the legal system, and the health care system. The system's impact does not stop with the survivors; it affects their interactions with their children and grandchildren—the intergenerational survivors. The impact of the schools is felt in every Aboriginal community in the country.

6) Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies, and the history of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples.

- Canadians generally have been led to believe—by what has been taught and not taught in schools— that Aboriginal people were and are uncivilized, primitive, and inferior, and continue to need to be civilized. Canadians have been denied a full and proper education as to the nature of Aboriginal societies. They have not been well informed about the nature of the relationship that was established initially between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and the way that relationship has been shaped over time by colonialism and racism. This lack of education and misinformation has led to misunderstanding and, in some cases, hostility between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians on matters of importance.

It will take time and commitment to reverse this legacy. The schools operated in Canada for well over a century. In the same way, the reconciliation process will have to span generations. It will take time to re-establish respect. Effective reconciliation will see Aboriginal people regaining their sense of self-respect, and the development of relations of mutual respect between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In future reports, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will be making specific recommendations as to how reconciliation can be furthered.

There are three points we would like to leave with all readers.

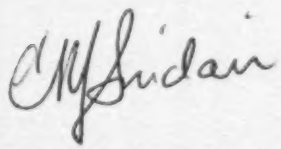
The first is that this story has heroes. The work of truth telling, healing, and reconciliation was commenced well over two decades ago by the people who, as children, had been victimized by this system. They continue to do the heavy labour of sharing their stories, and, by so doing, educating their children, their communities, and their country.

The second is obvious: a commission such as this cannot itself achieve reconciliation. Reconciliation implies relationship. The residential schools badly damaged relationships within Aboriginal families and communities, between Aboriginal peoples and churches, between Aboriginal peoples and the government, and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples within Canadian society. The Commissioners believe these relationships can and must be repaired. The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement is a positive step in this process since it formally recognized the need to come to terms with the past. The process of reconciliation will require the passionate commitment of individuals and the genuine engagement of society. There are people today who are living with the direct impacts of the schools: the survivors and their families. Specific attention will have to be paid to their needs. The conflicts that have arisen within communities as a result of the school system must be recognized and addressed.

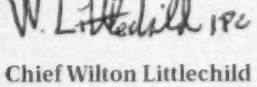
Churches have to define their role in this process as Aboriginal people reclaim what is of value to them.

Reconciliation also will require changes in the relationship between Aboriginal people and the government of Canada. The federal government, along with the provincial governments, historically has taken a social welfare approach to its dealings with Aboriginal people. This approach fails to recognize the unique legal status of Aboriginal peoples as the original peoples of this country. Without that recognition, we run the risk of continuing the assimilationist policies and the social harms that were integral to the residential schools.

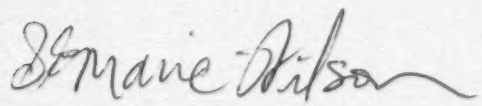
Finally, there is no reason for anyone who wants to contribute to the reconciliation process to wait until the publication of the Commission's final reports. There is an opportunity now for Canadians to engage in this work, to make their own contributions to reconciliation, and to create new truths about our country. As Assembly of First Nations National Chief Phil Fontaine observed when he accepted Canada's apology in June 2008, "Together we can achieve the greatness our country deserves." Our challenge and opportunity will be to work together to achieve that greatness.



Justice Murray Sinclair
Chair, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada



Chief Wilton Littlechild
Commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada



Marie Wilson
Commissioner, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

Recommendations

1) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada issue the necessary orders-in-council and funding authorities to ensure that the end date of the Commission and Commissioners' appointments coincide, including the necessary wind-down period after the Commission's last public event.

2) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada work with the Commission to ensure the Commission has adequate funds to complete its mandate on time.

3) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada ensure that Health Canada, in conjunction with appropriate provincial, territorial, and traditional health care partners, has the resources needed to provide for the safe completion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's full mandate, and to provide for continuous, high-quality mental health and cultural support services for all those involved in Truth and Reconciliation and other Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement activities, through to completion of these activities.

4) The Commission recommends that each provincial and territorial government undertake a review of the curriculum materials currently in use in public schools to assess what, if anything, they teach about residential schools.

5) The Commission recommends that provincial and territorial departments of education work in concert with the Commission to develop age-appropriate educational materials about residential schools for use in public schools.

6) The Commission recommends that each provincial and territorial government work with the Commission to develop public-education campaigns to inform the general public about the history and impact of residential schools in their respective jurisdiction.

7) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada and churches establish an ongoing cultural revival fund designed to fund projects that promote the traditional spiritual, cultural, and linguistic heritages of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

8) The Commission recommends that all levels of government develop culturally appropriate early childhood and parenting programs to assist young parents and families affected by the impact of residential schools and historic policies of cultural oppression in the development of parental understanding and skills.

9) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada, and the federal Minister of Health, in consultation with northern leadership in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories, take urgent action to develop plans and allocate priority resources for a sustainable, northern, mental health and wellness healing centre, with specialization in childhood trauma and long-term grief, as critically needed by residential school survivors and their families and communities.

10) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada, through Health Canada, immediately begin work with provincial and territorial government health and/or education agencies to establish means to formally recognize and accredit the knowledge, skills, and on-the-job training of Health Canada's community cultural and traditional knowledge healing team members, as demonstrated through

their intensive practical work in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and other Settlement Agreement provisions.

11) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada develop a program to establish health and wellness centres specializing in trauma and grief counselling and treatment appropriate to the cultures and experiences of multi-generational residential school survivors.

12) The Commission recommends that the parties to the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, with the involvement of other provincial or territorial governments as necessary, identify and implement the earliest possible means to address legitimate concerns of former students who feel unfairly left out of the Settlement Agreement, in order to diminish obstacles to healing within Aboriginal communities and reconciliation within Canadian society.

13) The Commission recommends that, to ensure that survivors and their families receive as much healing benefit as the apology may bring them, the Government of Canada distribute individual copies of the "Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools" to all known residential school survivors.

14) The Commission recommends the Government of Canada distribute to every secondary school in Canada a framed copy of the "Statement of Apology to Former Students of Indian Residential Schools" for prominent public display and ongoing educational purposes.

15) The Commission recommends that federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and all parties to the Settlement Agreement, undertake to meet and explore the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as a framework for working towards ongoing reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Canadians.

16) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada meet immediately with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to develop a plan to restore funding for healing initiatives to the Foundation within the next fiscal year.

17) The Commission recommends that the Government of Canada and the churches produce all their relevant records to the Commission as quickly as possible.

18) The Commission recommends that Canada and the churches make a dramatic change in the way they address the funding and timeliness of document production and digitization.

19) The Commission recommends that all agencies and organizations that are not parties to the Settlement Agreement, but have holdings relevant to the history and legacy of residential schools (such as provincial and university archives, libraries, museums, galleries, and Aboriginal organizations), contact the Commission and assist the Commission in receiving copies of all such relevant documents.

20) The Commission recommends that governments, educational institutions, and churches consult, design, announce, and publicly unveil residential school commemorations before the completion of the Commission's mandate.

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